

**REMARKS**

Claims 1-11 are amended, and pending in the application.

Claims 1-11 stand rejected as being unpatentable over Applicant's admitted prior art, Inoue, Nishimura, Lorimer and Brunelli, in various combinations. Applicant believes that the amendments to the claims presented herein overcome such rejections.

Referring initially to claim 1, the amended claim recites a method for conditioning a surface of a polishing pad after chemical-mechanical polishing, which comprises exposing the pad surface to cleaning material that is entirely in the vapor phase and which comprises steam. The amendment to claim 1 is supported by the originally-filed application at, for example, paragraph 0024 (which describes temperature and pressure conditions which would keep an entirety of the cleaning material steam in vapor phase), and accordingly does not comprise "new matter".

The Examiner cites Inoue for disclosing an apparatus configured to jet steam during conditioning of a pad. The Applicant notes, however, that the apparatus of Inoue is specifically configured to jet a two-phase mixture, and specifically to jet a combination of liquid and vapor (see, for example, the abstract of Inoue). Inoue accordingly does not disclose or suggest any system configured to jet only a single vapor phase during conditioning of a pad surface. The Examiner's other cited references also do not suggest or disclose the jetting of only vapor phase material during conditioning of a polishing pad surface.

The cited references do not suggest or disclose all of the recited features of claim 1, whether utilized alone or in any combination, since all of the references lack showing or

suggestion of the claim 1 recited feature of exposure of a pad surface to cleaning material that is entirely in the vapor phase. Amended claim 1 is therefore believed allowable over the Examiner's cited references, and the Applicant requests such allowance in the Examiner's next action.

Claims 2-11 depend from claim 1, and are therefore allowable for at least the reasons discussed above regarding claim 1.

Claims 1-11 are allowable for the reasons discussed above, and the Applicant therefore requests formal allowance of such claims in the Examiner's next action.

Respectfully submitted,

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By: 

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